Nothing Changes Behaviour Like Pain

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/12197370.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter, Encephalitis the dog - Character
Additional Tags:	Post-Episode: s03e13 The Wrath of the Lamb, Hannigram - Freeform, Murder Husbands, Will Loves Hannibal, Hannibal Loves Will, sad Hannibal, Frustrated Will, Hannibal is being difficult, Will is trying his best, Stress Baking, Fluff, Hurt/Comfort
Language:	English
Series:	Part 5 of Prompts
Collections:	Wendigo & Stag, Hannibal
Stats:	Published: 2017-09-26 Words: 4,417 Chapters: 1/1

Nothing Changes Behaviour Like Pain

by amoralagent

Summary

Based on the prompt: "You bake when you're stressed and sometimes you give me cookies, but recently you've been giving me whole baskets each day, now I'm not complaining but are you okay?"

It came out sadder than I planned. But also cute. Mostly cute.

Hannibal could sense when Will got out of bed, hearing the pads of his feet and smelling the sweat from his shirt over the sound and smell of sizzling bacon. When he glanced up from his meal preparation Will came into the room and instantly squatted down to dog height, greeting the beings enthusiastically with laughed hellos and good mornings, dog hair visible in the air like nuclear fallout. He'd clearly discarded the dirty shirt, as he was adorned in nothing but boxer shorts. The afternoon sun dropped lazily against his skin, painting it a white-gold: "Good morning to you too." Hannibal offered, a fond smile denting the corner of his mouth when their eyes met. The white shepherd dog Cephy took the opportunity to lick a stripe across Will's chin.

Pushing the excited mutt's muzzle down and standing, practically giggling, Will wiped the back of his hand where the dog's tongue had been. He smiled warmly: "What're you cooking?"

"Eggs Florentine with *Poitrine Fumée*." Will hummed as he came over, clicks of little dog paws following eagerly behind him.

"So you *did* listen to me about breakfast," Hannibal surprisingly didn't sigh, and Will grinned, "Even though it's the afternoon."

"I simply want to provide for you, Will."

"How gracious of you." He swooped in close to Hannibal, and before he could move his head further enough away to avoid the remnants of dog spit, a mischievous kiss was placed against his cheek, "You should've stayed in bed; I was very cold all on my own."

"Your sleeping pattern, as disastrous as it is, won't be changed on my behalf. Nor mine, yours." He smirked a tiny bit, maybe, proceeding to plate the dish, subtly watching as Will narrowed his eyes a little, "The compromise, is providing breakfast. Along with anything you wish."

"Well, you're doing a great job. But I don't need to tell *you* that." Will quipped, pouring some juice for them both in glasses at the table, and noting the smile present in Hannibal's eyes. Clearing his throat, he took a sip, and turned back: "There's something else you could provide me with."

Hannibal's eyebrow raised just slightly at that, moving the pans to the sink: "*Oh*. What would that be?" They looked at each other and Will looked strangely concerned when he'd expected to be faced with blatant flirtation. In fact, he looked worried. Rather decisively, Hannibal busied himself with the eggs.

"Listen, I know you bake when you're stressed, mostly cookies, and that's great, but- um-- recently you've been giving me practically whole baskets of them." There was no change in Hannibal's face, he just added the hollandaise like Will wasn't even talking. Will moved closer to the counter: "Now, I'm not complaining, but-- are you okay?"

He looked at him kindly, eyes dropping down to his chest, then back up, "Baking is often used in occupational therapy. It combines physical and projection activities to release endorphins. Along with being a rewarding hobby." Will sighed loudly instead of interrupting, knowing it was useless, "You reap the rewards, most of the time." Hannibal smiled a little then, vaguely implying how it happens to be more of a battle to keep Will away from the batter, much like a begging hound. Will pursed his lips.

"That's *not* an answer, Hannibal." His plate was given to him and it smelt fantastic, but he didn't move to sit down, "You know it's not."

"Would you rather I channel my emotions into something else?"

"That's not an answer either. And no, unless you feel the need to." Hannibal took off his apron and folded it onto the side, "I don't see what those emotions are. Not really."

"I believe you've thought of the possibilities." They both went and sat down then, Will the more reluctant of the two.

Will cut a bite of his egg and spooned it into his mouth, speaking around it, "You'd be right. I just want to hear it from you. Enough with these bullshit mind games-- like I'm still a patient, sometimes."

"Are yo-"

"Do *not* go and change the subject." He pointed his knife like a threat, tone a tad firmer. As divine as the meal was, Will stopped eating, to glare: "It's like it's a sin to be concerned about you."

"Is the knife necessary?" He'd forgotten he had it raised, and pointed it again.

"Is it?"

"It *is* blunt."

"I *am* creative." Hannibal paused eating to drink, looking at Will as if nothing was awry.

"What do you think is wrong? Apart from the apparent excessive baking. Does everything not seem normal?" Will huffed and carried on with his food, chewing on thoughts at the same time. One of the dogs pushed past his legs under the table in search for treasure; he found himself stroking him absentmindedly with his foot.

Hannibal met his eyes again with that therapist-like curiosity that made Will's skin crawl. Itch, even. It's like he could hear the clicks and burrowing of thoughts inside his pupils, millipedes scuttling. When look turned expectant, the realisation fell into him, cold: "So, you want me to psychoanalyse you?" He looked at him, unconvinced, expecting-- no, *wanting* him to shake his head.

Judging by how far any other psychoanalytical methods had worked on Hannibal thus far, it would probably be a fruitless effort. Then again, the people that tried it weren't Will. And Will had his own methods. Especially when it came to Hannibal Lecter. *Hint hint.*

Hannibal looked mildly amused: "You're saying that like you haven't done it before." Well shit, he's right. Will's brow furrowed even more than it already was.

"To profile you. As a serial killer."

"Why would you say it as if it was that impersonal?" A feigned look of hurt accompanied that, finishing his meal: "It was intrusive, still."

"Why can't you just, I don't know, *say how you feel?"* Hannibal's eyebrows shot up, a weird look, probably pride, crossing his features. This was his game. It could be a test, but, *really?* Did he *really* need to jump through hoops? *Even now?* Will visibly deflated: "It's *never* easy with you." He would've made it a question, but *Jesus Christ*, it didn't need an answer. A direct response from Hannibal Lecter is an entirely new breed of a mythical creature.

"Love is a journey, not a destination." A smile dented the corners of his eyes again. *I fucking hate you* sprang to Will's mind; *upturn the table.* Instead, he defaulted to the blankest look he could.

"You're fucking serious?"

"You recommended the idea, but yes. I am now."

"I just--" Will gave a long-suffering sigh, placing his cutlery on the plate beside the last few bites. Talking about murder and gore over breakfast is fine, but good communication skills. A big no-no, apparently: "Surely table manners include that you shouldn't psychoanalyse at the dinner table."

"I wouldn't expect you to do it now."

"*Oh*," Will chuckled, pretty humourlessly, "We're feeling merciful today, *are we?"*

"Not with that attitude, anyway." Hannibal moved to clear the table. Normally, Will would've stopped him and demanded, but now getting an answer out of him would have to happen after this test, or game, or whatever fucking bullshit Hannibal was playing at. So he didn't, and just sat there wiggling his toes under the pug, Frank, now asleep on his feet.

Even in nothing but briefs, Will was surprisingly unlikely to get anywhere with getting Hannibal to fess up. Sure, Hannibal had been subjected to a panoply of drugs, and doctors, and discussions, all to get him to confess to one thing or another, but Will trumped all that, certainly if he played his cards right. Right, as in naked. It goes without saying, really.

Much to Will's melodramatic dismay, it seemed the man would always make a puzzle from the smallest of things; make it feel like Will's doing, too, as if *he'd* been irreverent to ask about his husband's feelings. Instinctively, he'd say that the issue at hand wasn't that bad, and it's just snowballed from having a lack of better things to think on, and Hannibal was coping well enough, perhaps. But that's Will, and Hannibal is Hannibal. If something's got him worried it must be bad.

For a few weeks, in bouts, things between them would be unfettered, feral truths darting around and laying out unbothered in post-coital hazes and shared mornings. Everything seemingly placid. They'd have the odd argument, disagreements about organs getting weirdly aggressive or something else equally and uniquely macabre, but they'd still share a bed at the end of the night. But then, retrospectively unprovoked, one of them would ask a misstep of a question, or dredge something back up, and it would get heated and awkward and dull.

It could last for as long as a week: this unhappy static sitting between them. If it was Will who put a foot wrong, he'd more often than not be reaching out blindly in the dark, still struggling to navigate the convoluted hallways and stairwells of Hannibal's thinking- unless Will had had a go at Hannibal about something, in which case, he would end up being the less stubborn of the two and calm himself down to absolve it eventually. Y'know, like a normal, relatively well-adjusted human being.

Then again, eventually would be after about-- three days.

Hannibal would just disconnect for a while until he's wordlessly start gravitating closer to Will. In need of human contact, despite his callous demeanour and closed silence. Even in his sleep, Will would notice the strategic moves of feigned restlessness that would end up with an exasperated cuddling, mainly so they could both sleep soundly.

Oftentimes, Hannibal would simply give in and end up sliding his hands around Will's waist from behind, or pulling Will's feet into his lap, or spontaneously slipping his hand into Will's and kissing it. To call it an apology would be a risk, but it secretly was. Will still couldn't figure out whether it was his paranoia or reality that had him thinking that Hannibal would smile against him, whenever and however touching came about again. After all, Hannibal is nothing if not proud.

Rather expertly though, Will would see it coming, and choose whether or not to oblige it, depending on his mood. He could be cruel and turn away from kisses and soft words, but it was pretty easy to overcome, fortunately for Hannibal.

Worst case scenario, one of them would have to actually apologise. Or, *God forbid*, say please. Begging would be an absolute miracle.

It would all be up in the air until then, however, and Will just didn't want to have to deal with this. Especially when he didn't even do anything to warrant it! He just asked what was wrong based on weird behaviour, and this is the thanks he gets. Disturbing the fucking peace; having to go pseudo-therapist again for the first time in about seven years. Maybe that had never really stopped. Hmph.

For now, then: *Domestic Bliss? Who's she?*

****

Later on in the day, Hannibal was busy quietly amusing himself by reading Søren Kierkegaard's Fear and Trembling, holding the book in one hand, and a dog butt in the other to stop his trusty pug Frank from sliding any further off of his desk chair. Just as the small, snoring loaf of a dog shifted his position, in the middle of turning the page, Hannibal became vaguely aware of the smell of burning.

At first he thought it could be a draft wafting in a far-away farmyard fire, or one of Will's scented candle burning down, until it got more pungent, and he could scent the odd saltiness of blistering flesh in the air.

He unhinged himself from the resting creature and left him to snooze by himself, dropping his book on the desk, and quickly got up to investigate. Before he rounded the corner to the open-plan space, he could hear Will's enthusiastic swearing, the sound of the oven timer, and somewhat of a scuffle. Then he knew to prepare himself.

What he was faced with upon arriving in the kitchen was nothing short of chaos.

There was a surprising small amount of smoke, emanating from the blackened spheres lined on a now ruined baking tray, atop the flour-covered oven. In fact, there was flour, and other dusty food ingredients, on just about every available service. Used bowls and utensils were piled up by the sink instead of in it, chocolate chip cookies melting into the floor, and a couple of the most daring dogs had decided to try and help Will clean up before he was discovered, by licking *everything*.

Will, in the eye of the cookery storm, stood in front of him adorned in *his* apron, mussed and equally messy, holding one hand with the other, and giving him those big apology eyes.

Hannibal didn't give an inkling as to how he felt about the ruined kitchen, only looking around, then meeting Will's woeful expression. Frank came barrelling into the room as Will opened his mouth to speak, snorting in excitement at the opportunity of food. Almost instantly, Hannibal made a small, sharp sound of reprimand and all the dogs became alert or flinched, *even Will*, and scuttled out; including Frank, who lingered for a hopeful moment, then sulked away.

Before any words were said, Will swore some more under his breath and tore the apron off himself, turning to the sink to run his hand under the tap: "I burnt the cookies I was trying to make you. And myself."

"I could smell that."

"Oh, smelt dinner, did you?" Will chuckled slightly, biting his inner lip as Hannibal came up beside him and gently pulled his hand from under the water to check it over. It wasn't a substantial injury, but nasty and red on the tip of his index finger, angry enough to blister. Will only panicked for a second when Hannibal put his finger into his mouth: "I was joking." He half-pleaded, and Hannibal stopped what he was doing. There was a pause.

"This is not the first time your fingers have been in my mouth, Will."

Will deadpanned, trying to stay stern past a smile: "It is after I've ruined your kitchen."

"Saliva has healing qualities. Besides, if I were to eat you, you'd have to do something far worse than this."

"You've killed people for less." As Hannibal bought Will's hand to his mouth again, Will realised that he was making an argument that sounded like he really did want him to bite it off, and it occurred to him how easily it could happen at that very minute, how it would snap like a carrot-- so he quickly clarified: "As much as I love you, I don't think I deserve to lose a finger."

Hannibal looked at him for a few seconds, those red-brown eyes, a tiny glimpse into that metastasised, maroon-shade hunger that rested underneath his person-suit, now shy and waning under Will's gaze, as it always did. The look would've frightened him, would've frightened anyone, but it didn't. Hannibal removed his stinging finger from his lips and kissed his palm, "I wouldn't dream of it," Will placed the hand on his cheek and traced the scar against the bone before retracting it, turning off the tap and dithering about how to start cleaning up after himself: "I would've still eaten these if you'd given them to me." Hannibal admonished, admiring the charcoal-brown colour of the cookies.

"That's very sweet, Hannibal, but you don't need to bullshit me." Will smiled, secretly embarrassed: "They're practically inedible."

"I'm sure I've consumed worse things."

Will almost choked on his own spit at where his mind went, "How dare you." He just gave Will a sidelong glance with a hint of a smirk, having entertained himself. Will scowled despite his shocked smile, "Another comment like that, and you'll starve."

"I could forbid that luxury from you, since you've ruined my kitchen." That made Will uncomfortable, his cheeks flushing.

"I know, I'm sorry. This is what happens when I attempt anything nice."

"Burnt cookies. I didn't know you were so romantic." Hannibal moved closer as Will scowled at him.

"Forget me doing anything nice for you ever again."

"Ever again?"

"That's a promise." He threw a flour-covered dishcloth at him that made a mess of his suit, but did nothing to slow his approach.

"Is it now?" Hannibal moved in to kiss him but Will turned away.

"Try and kiss me, and you're losing that tongue." Will was surprising defiant in his statement, unmoving, even when Hannibal tucked his nose against his cheek: "I swear to--"

"To God? I doubt that would do you any good."

"Oh, I forget. Your *holiness*."

"I'm not opposed to you calling me that."

"I'm not singing your praise in bed, Hannibal. Like a choirboy." He looked up at those red-tinted eyes and knew what he was about to say.

"I would say you do that already," Will gritted his teeth, "Your voice is certainly beautiful, unabashed." That snapped the last of the threads of defence Will had, finally undulating, and Hannibal kissed him hard. Will was pressed back into the countertop, Hannibal's hands finding his hips, but he didn't reciprocate the touch, white-knuckling the counter instead as Hannibal kissed him. Will was then pushed up onto it, finding his hands gripping Hannibal's lapels without a second thought, the mouth against him insistent and rougher as Hannibal moved down to the pale of his throat.

"You can't kiss your way out of this." Will warned, breathless. He made a point of not moving his legs to pull him near.

Words were mumbled against his pulse-point between teeth carving out marks, "Out of what?"

"You-- you know what. The same thing that has *me* making cookies to relieve *my* anxiety." Hannibal didn't stop what he was doing, seemingly ignoring Will entirely, plucking little whines and gasps from him like music and making his flutter closed as he spoke, "You haven't answered me." Hannibal stopped then, dropped his head down, and sighed.

"I don't wish to dwell on it."

"I'll dwell on it for you?" The only response he got was the wrapping of arms loosely around his waist to hold him tighter, and he hugged him back, draping his arms over the broad shoulders and scratching lightly at the hair on the nape of his neck. Will noticed a soothing of a hand down his spine, and back up, as Hannibal breathed in his scent again in a long inhale, "You'll feel better if you tell me." Hannibal just continued his slow breathing, *"Please?"* Another sigh.

Still nestling his face into the crook of Will's shoulder, Hannibal spoke in a hushed tone, just loud enough to make out: "I can't remember the exact date: I just know it was around this time."

Then a pause that lounged into silence. Will remained patient. He felt Hannibal's eyes closed by the tickle of eyelashes that barely touched his skin, his palms spread wide on his back, and time crept past as if the conversation hadn't been started.

Will couldn't hear or feel Hannibal crying, but he could tell that he was gone. Gone from the present. Probably gone entirely from his body, off in another world, another time, walking through expansive, nurtured flower gardens, and looking out across placid lakes as cool as summer's air. Just as Will had his peace in the wading of the stream, Hannibal had a similar distraction technique that was rarely witnessed, or spoke on. Detached himself, like an animal being pulled from it's cage. Will allowed him that, briefly; thought too, about where Hannibal would go to escape, to hide, and if he even knew of the places to look. Maybe in the frame of a Botticelli painting, or drifting past the Seine, or wandering up the stairs of a castle he'd once

seen, before. More likely, in memories Will would only catch tiny glimpses of, and catch to collect like feathers from a pillow, or flocking bird. Never anymore than that.

He made sure his voice was soft when he spoke, "What happened around this time?"

Hannibal shifted beneath his touch and words like it pained him, but made no effort to move away, concentrating on Will's heartbeat to ground himself. Will did his best to accommodate the silences, until: "She always loved my baking when I was just a boy. I would only do it for her, just to see the light in her eyes when she smiled. When she was tall enough to reach, she would steal a pastry, or chocolate pieces-- cookies were her favourite, and she'd run squealing, laughing when I caught her." He remembered those tiny, thieving hands, unmarked and delicate, reaching up for his own, always trusting. She was so small, so fragile yet boisterous, unable to say many words, her vocabulary consisting of basic names and wants, but mostly sounds. Her laugh, oh God, her laugh was harmonious, loud, and infectious. That incredible, unfathomable joy in the crooked grin of the child, his charge, an angel-- *surely she must be?* Utterly, and exquisitely artless, never fully aware; now forever a four year old with a soul as pure as Memphian skies that *never knew a storm.*

His chest grew heavy, as if filling with liquid. Images of blossoms catching the wind, unsullied wings of birds, unsteady, graceless movements of first walking, the sunken little eyes and cold hands he'd hold in the dark unknown, all flitting alive in his memories in eidetic thought-- if he'd reach out to hold them, they'd be gone.

It occurred to Will all at once about who and what he was talking of, without saying it. He found himself overcome, unable to form words; placing a hand into Hannibal's hair and noiselessly sighing, feeling Hannibal's pain like his own. He kept his eyes closed, afraid of seeing ghosts. Hannibal turned his face away from the exposed skin of Will's neck, not allowing him to feel the gentle warmth of the few tears as they fell. Will wanted to ask questions, finally receive the whole story, but he bit his tongue. Pushing for answers never worked.

The sound of her screaming will forever haunt him. She wouldn't stop crying. Those desperate, deafening wails of a suffering and starved child are like nothing he'd ever heard. Since, he'd been subjected to nothing worse. Some nights, they'd plague his dreams, and he'd wake up lost and bereft, even more so than normal; her presence never left him. *Never*.

"Stealing cookies? Sounds like we'd have made fast friends." Will mumbled into the side of Hannibal's head, trying to sound amused past the ache in his chest. Hannibal made a noise of laughter, breathy, and Will thought he said the completely wrong thing when he moved to pull back, but instead of leaving, leaned in to rest his head against Will's; Will's fingers circling the back of his neck still and scratching at his nape, like he would if comforting a dog. It was working nonetheless, their eyes darker with sorrow and love when they met, a smile ghosting Hannibal's lips.

"She would've adored you." He confirmed, and Will smiles wide then, tears present in his eyes glistening.

"*Two Lecters!* I can barely manage one." A chuckle came out as a low sound, and quickly dissipated. Hannibal marvels. Will can feel that intense stare, even his face is inches away

and his eyes are unable to focus, but it feels like he's seeing into his soul-- and he loves it. Hannibal's hands stroked down his sides like he's holding him together, and he sighs, "I'm *so* sorry, Hannibal." As soon as he says it, he realises it's cliché. But he meant it wholeheartedly. The words sound as genuine as they ever could be, and he felt it as Hannibal's weight shifts a little to lean closer: "I don't know what else to say."

"You don't have to." His voice was soft and incongruously comforting, considering *surely he shouldn't be the one sounding like that?* Will opened his mouth to speak again, say something unhelpful and kind, but decided against it, and kissed him, gently. And he kept kissing him, tasting the saltiness of tears, and he gripped hold of him as if they'd be torn apart. Hannibal obliged, and kissed back harder, one of his wide palms digging into the flesh of Will's back, the other finding his face, cradling him there.

Will drew out a kiss long enough to make them both starve for breath, holding Hannibal's face in his hands, and wiped under his eye with the pad of his thumb when they pulled away, but only for a moment: "Couch." He instructed, not urgent or demanding, and Hannibal picked him up under the thighs and carried him round the counter, the kisses never disrupting his movements. Before Will knew it, he had a hold of the knot of Hannibal's tie as he was perched on the arm of the chair, Hannibal leaning over him slightly, goading him closer and to go with him in the slight tug on the silk and working to hook his legs around him loosely- ankles sneaking into the crooks of his knees.

Hannibal just levelled his gaze, a smile shown in the unnoticeable lines around his eyes, but underlying, residual pain obvious to him, the mask gone. His smile cracked through as he spoke: "What are you doing, Will?"

Will offered a coquettish grin, but one of a sympathetic kind, "A wise man once told me that saliva has healing qualities." He felt Hannibal's wistful sigh, and he allowed Will to pull his face nearer to his own, "Not that I'm kissing my way out of *anything*: I want you to feel a bit better, and know that *I'm here*." He kissed him tenderly, but brief: "I'll listen to anything you tell me, if you want to talk. And if you don't: *don't*."

Hannibal just looked at him for a moment like he was memorising a piece of art to recreate, and allows himself to feel wholly, and disastrously, in love. Will's heart palpitated, "You are ineffable, Will." Will offered a narrow-eyed look, smiling: "Delightful. Always."

"And I love you, Hannibal." They fell back on the couch together, mouths busied and bodies intertwined, carving out space for words left unsaid.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!